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SPEECH

OF

MR. CALHOUN, OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

ON THE RESOLUTIONS

GIVING NOTICE TO GREAT BRITAIN

OF THE

ABROGATION OF THE CONVENTION OF JOINT OCCUPANCY.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 16, 1846.

Mr. CALHOUN, being entitled to the floor, rose and addressed the Senate:

The question under consideration is, whether notice shall be given to Great Britain that the convention of joint occupancy between us and her shall terminate at the end of the year. To that question, and those immediately growing out of it, I shall confine my remarks. I shall say nothing in reference to the title to Oregon. Having been connected with the negotiation in its early stages, it would be indelicate on my part to discuss the subject of title. I shall abstain from all personalities and every thing calculated to wound the feelings of others; but shall express myself freely, fully, and candidly on all the subjects on which I may touch, in the course of my remarks. With these prefatory observations, I shall proceed at once to the discussion of the question of notice.

There is one point in which all must be agreed; that a great change has taken place since the commencement of this session in reference to notice, in its bearings upon the question of peace and war. At that time, notice was a question of the first magnitude, on the decision of which, to all appearance, depended the question of peace or war; but now it is one of comparatively minor importance, and may be decided any way, without any decisive effect on either. The cause of this change will be explained in the course of my remarks. So great, indeed, has been the change that it has not only rendered inapplicable the reasons urged in the message, recommending notice to be given, but has altered materially the position of the Executive, and that of the several parties in the Senate to which it has given origin, as I shall next proceed to show.

That the recommendation of the message is founded on the conviction that there was no hope of compromise of the difficulties growing out of the Oregon question, is too clear to admit of any rational doubt. Its language is express. It states in so many words the conviction, that no compromise could be effected which ought to be accepted. On that conviction it announces that the offer which had been made to the British minister to settle the controversy on the 49th parallel of latitude had been withdrawn after its rejection, and our title to the whole asserted. On the same conviction, it recommends to Congress to give the notice in order to annul the convention with the view to remove all impediments to the assertion of our right to the whole of the territory. Assuming, then, that there would be no compromise, it informs us that, at the expiration of the twelve months, a period would arrive when our title to the territory must be abandoned or firmly

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maintained; and that neither our honor nor our interest would permit us to abandon it; in other words, that we must then assert our exclusive sovereignty to the whole, to the exclusion of that of Great Britain, unless the latter should, in the interval, abandon its claims to the territory. Throughout the whole recommendation there is not the slightest intimation that any compromise is expected. On the contrary, the very opposite is constantly assumed.

But it is alleged that the reasons for believing that there could be no compromise was derived from the evidence which the negotiation itself furnished, and especially by the rejection of the offer to compromise on 49°. Such I admit to be the case, and also that it may be fairly inferred, if England should renew on her part the proposition rejected by her minister, or one substantially the same, our Executive would accept the offer, and settle by compromise the conflicting claims to the territory. But the message intimates nowhere the slightest expectation that such an offer would be made, or, if made, that any compromise could be effected.

Such is the view which I have been constrained to take, after a most careful and candid examination of the portion of the message recommending notice; and such, I infer, is the view taken by the portion of the Senate who believe our title to the whole territory to be clear and unquestionable. On no other view can their warm and decided support of notice be explained. They not only believe that our title is clear and unquestionable to the whole, but also that the honor of the country demands that it should be asserted and maintained by an appeal to arms without the surrender of any part. Acting on this conviction, it is manifest that they can only support notice on the belief that it would not lead to compromise. On the opposite, they would be compelled to oppose it.

Such, also, would seem to be the view taken of the message by the community at large at the time, if we may judge from the tone of the public press, or what perhaps is a still truer index—the conduct of our intelligent business men. The message had a most decided effect in that respect. Stocks of every description fell, marine insurances rose, commercial pursuits were suspended, and our vessels remained inactive at the wharves.

Such, also, was the view taken by a great majority of that portion of the Senate who were opposed to giving notice, and among whom I include myself. We opposed it on grounds directly the reverse of those on which those who believed our rights to the whole territory to be clear and unquestionable supported it.

They supported notice because they believed there neither ought to be or would be any compromise. We, on the contrary, opposed it because we believed there might be, and ought to be, compromise. They opposed compromise because, as has been stated, they believed our title to be perfect to the whole; while we supported it because we believed the title of neither to the whole to be clear and indisputable; and that the controversy might be adjusted by a fair partition of the territory. With such impression, we believed that two such powerful and enlightened countries as the United States and Great Britain, would not resort to arms to settle a controversy which might be peacefully and honorably settled by negotiation and compromise.

Entertaining this opinion, we were compelled to oppose notice, because it was necessary to prevent an appeal to arms, and insure the peaceful settlement of the question. By defeating it, a breathing time would at least be afforded to both parties for calm and mature reflection, under the influence of which it was hoped that negotiation might be renewed, and the difference honorably compromised. Or, in case that should fail, things might remain as they have been without a resort to force. In that case, the territory would be left open to emigration, and the question, to whom it should ultimately belong, would be decided by settlement and colonization, unless Great Britain should give notice on her part, in order to prevent it. If she should, we would at least gain the advantage of transferring the responsibility from us to her, should war ensue.

Another portion of the Senate appeared to be in favor both of compromise and notice. Their views were not explicitly expressed; but, as far as they were developed, they, too, seemed to think that our title was not so perfect as to exclude an honorable compromise, and appeared to anticipate it in opposition to the message in recommending it on the three following grounds: first, on the ground of the general declaration of the President in the latter part of the message, that he hoped an amicable arrangement may be made of the question in dispute, in connexion with a declaration of Mr. Buchanan to the same effect, in one of his letters to Mr. Pakenham. It is impossible for me, with every disposition to support the recommendation of the President in favor of notice, to concur in the opinion that a mere general expression of the kind, and inserted in another portion of the message, even when backed by a similar declaration of the Secretary of State, could be fairly construed to overrule the opinion clearly and explicitly expressed by the message in recommending notice, that no compromise which ought to be accepted could be effected. I cannot admit of such a construction, not only because I think it unreasonable, but because I regard the duty of the President, imposed by the Constitution, to recommend measures to Congress, as one of a solemn character, and that it ought to be performed with the utmost candor and sincerity. Being addressed to a co-ordinate department of the government, it ought to express plainly and explicitly his reasons and motives for recommending the measure, omitting none which he regards as material, and inserting none but such as he believes ought to have an influence upon the deliberations of Congress. It ought to be free from the suspicion of being diplomatic. To admit the contrary, would destroy all confidence between the legislative and executive departments to the great detriment of the government. With these impressions, it would be to disparage the character of the President for me to concur in the construction.

The next ground taken by a portion of the Senate referred to is, that notice is recommended to be given by the message, not with the view of giving power to the President to assert our rights to the whole territory, but as a moral weapon, to enforce compromise.

To this construction I have the same difficulty in assenting as to the preceding. There is nothing in the language of the recommendation to authorize it. On the contrary, every word it contains looks expressly, as has been stated, to the enforcement of our rights to the territory on the expiration of the notice. To give a contrary interpretation would be to give a diplomatic character to the message, and be subject to all the objections which have been just suggested. But admitting that it was intended, as alleged, as a moral weapon to effect compromise, I would ask, how could that be effected, but by using it as the means to intimidate Great Britain—to intimidate, by telling her that she must quit the territory within the year, or be expelled at its expiration by force? And what would that be but an appeal to her fear, with the hope of extorting concessions which her reason had refused to yield? Such an appeal in case of a feeble nation would be hazardous; but in that of one as great and powerful as England, instead of a weapon to enforce a compromise, it would be one calculated to defeat it.

The remaining reason for voting notice on the part of the Senators referred to, is of a very different character. It objects to the convention itself, and condemns the policy of entering into either that of 1818 or 1827, on the ground that instead of being the means of securing and perpetuating our rights in the territory, they have had the very reverse effect, to weaken instead of strengthen our title to the territory. My opinion, I must say, is precisely the opposite. It would, indeed, have been desirable to have settled it then by a compromise on the 49th parallel of latitude; but that, as is well known, was impossible at the time. The offer, in fact, was made on our side, but rejected on the part of Great Britain. The rejection left no other alternative but an appeal to arms, or a surrender of our rights to the territory, or to enter into the convention. To do nothing would have been

to acquiesce in the claims of Great Britain, whose subjects were then in actual possession. Her possession, being adverse to ours, would have been gradually maturing, through the long intervening period, into a title too perfect to be opposed by ours. To avoid that, we were compelled to resort to force, or enter into a convention to preserve our rights. We wisely preferred the latter, and the conventions of 1818 and 1827 were the consequence of that preference. They were entered into for the two-fold objects, as substitutes for war, and the means of preserving our rights to the territory, as they then stood, unimpaired. To appreciate the wisdom of the policy, it must be borne in mind that at that time our means of asserting our rights to the territory or of acquiring possession were exceedingly limited, compared to those of Great Britain, but that they were steadily and rapidly increasing. Those who had the management of affairs at that period wisely relied upon time and the rapid spread of population in a western direction, as the means ultimately of acquiring possession of the territory, and entered into the convention with a view of preserving our rights unimpaired until they could operate with full effect.

It is but too common of late to condemn the acts of our predecessors, and to pronounce them unjust, unwise, or unpatriotic, from not adverting to the circumstances under which they acted. Thus to judge, is to do great injustice to the wise and patriotic men who preceded us. In this case, it is to condemn such men as Monroe, Rush, Clay, and Gallatin—all of whom had an agency in directing or conducting the negotiations which terminated in the adoption of these conventions. It would be hard to pronounce men like them to have been unwise or unpatriotic in what they did, or to pronounce President Jackson and others after him so, because they acquiesced for many years under the operation of the convention of 1827, when they could have terminated it at any time by giving a year's notice. I have not named the most prominent individual concerned in directing these negotiations, because his course on this occasion has, in my opinion, cancelled any previous credit in that connexion to which he would have been otherwise entitled.

Such was the state of things at the commencement of the session, when the President recommended notice to be given to terminate the joint occupancy; and such the position and grounds assumed by the several portions of the Senate in reference to the notice. Since then, as has been stated, there has been a great change, which has materially affected the question of notice, and the position taken by the different portions of the body in reference to it, as I shall next explain.

Public opinion has had time to develop itself, not only on this, but on the other side of the Atlantic; and that opinion has pronounced most audibly and clearly in favor of compromise. The development has been going on not only in the community, but also in this body; and I now feel that I hazard nothing in saying, that a large majority of the Senate is in favor of terminating the controversy by negotiation, and an honorable compromise. And what is very material, the opinion of the British Government on the subject of compromise has been more clearly and specifically developed than when the message was transmitted to Congress; so much so that there is ground to hope that it is prepared to adjust the difference in reference to the territory substantially on the basis which was offered by the President. It seems to me impossible that any other construction can be given to what Sir R. Peel said in reply to the question put to him by Lord John Russell. His declaration was made under circumstances calculated to give it great weight. The object of making it was clearly not to censure the able and very faithful representative of Great Britain in this country, but to use the occasion to give assurance that he is ready to make a compromise, as it may be inferred, substantially on the basis of the rejected offer. I trust sincerely that such is the interpretation which our Government has put upon it; and that, regarding it as a direct step towards compromise, it has met it with a step on our

part, by suitable instructions to our minister in that country. It is to be hoped that a communication has already been transmitted to that effect, which may have the effect of removing what would seem to be the only material difficulty in the way of an adjustment; that is which shall make the first step towards resuming the negotiation.

As things now stand, I no longer consider it as a question, whether the controversy shall be pacifically arranged or not, nor even in what manner it shall be arranged. I regard the arrangement now simply a question of time, and I do trust that, in concluding it, there will be no unnecessary delay. The business of both countries, and of commerce generally, requires that it should be concluded as promptly as possible. There is still another and a higher reason why it should be speedily settled. The question is one of a momentous and delicate character, and like all such, should be settled in order to avoid adverse contingencies with the least practicable delay. A further inducement for despatch in settling the Oregon question is, that upon it depends the settlement of the question with Mexico. Until the former is settled, there is but slender prospect that the latter can be; for so long as the Oregon question is left open, Mexico will calculate the chances of a rupture between us and Great Britain, in the event of which she would be prepared to make common cause against us. But when an end is put to any such hope, she will speedily settle her difference with us. I trust that when we come to settle it, we will deal generously with her, and that we will prove ourselves too just and magnanimous to take advantage of her feeble condition.

It is this great change in favor of the prospect of settling the controversy in reference to Oregon honorably, by negotiation and compromise, which has occurred since the commencement of the session, that has made the great difference in the importance of the bearing of notice on the question of peace and war. What then was apparently almost hopeless, may be now regarded as highly probable, unless there should be some great mismanagement; but just as compromise is more hopeless, notice becomes more important in its bearings on the relations of peace and war; and on the other hand, just as the chances of compromise are increased, notice becomes less important; and hence its importance at the commencement of the session, and its comparatively little importance now.

I shall next proceed to inquire what bearing the increased prospect of compromise has on the position of the Executive, and that of the several portions of this body, in reference to notice, and the Oregon question generally. That it is calculated to effect materially the position of the Executive must be apparent. That he should recommend giving notice to terminate the convention of joint occupancy of the territory, with a view of asserting our exclusive sovereignty to the whole, according to h view of our title, when there was little or no hope of compromise, is not at all inconsistent with his being prepared to adjust the difference by compromise, substantially on the ground offered by himself, now when there is a reasonable prospect it may be effected. Measures of policy are necessarily controlled by circumstances, and consequently what may be wise and expedient under certain circumstances, might be eminently unwise and impolitic under different circumstances. To persist in acting in the same way under circumstances essentially different, would be folly and obstinacy, and not consistency. True consistency, that of the prudent and the wise, is to act in conformity with circumstances, and not to act always the same way under a change of circumstances. There is a prevalent error on this point. Many think that the very essence of consistency is to act always the same way—adhering to the same party, or to the same measures of policy, without regard to change of circumstances. Their consistency is like that of a physician, who, in the treatment of a highly inflammatory fever, would administer emetics and calomel, not only at the beginning, but at every subsequent stage of the disease. It is the consistency of a quack,

which would be sure to kill the patient. The public man who would be consistent in the same way would be but a political quack, and in dangerous cases, his prescription would be not less fatal. If then the Executive is now really in favor of compromise, notwithstanding the strong language used in his message recommending notice, of which I have no information that is not common to all, it ought not to subject him to the charge of inconsistency, but should be put down to the change of circumstances to which I have adverted.

That it is also calculated to alter the positions taken by the different portions of the Senate, in reference to notice, is no less certain; and that my friends (for such I will call them) who go for the whole of Oregon, must, I am sure, feel to be the case with them. They cannot, I am confident, have the same interest in notice now, when there is great reason to believe that the difference will be compromised with or without notice, as they had when there was no hope of compromise. It is clear, that under such change of circumstances, the reason for giving notice with them has, in a great measure if not altogether, ceased, so that I should not be surprised to find their votes cast against it.

But I trust that the change has gone further, and that they, by this time, begin to see that there are some doubts as to our title to the whole of Oregon being clear and unquestionable. It cannot, at least, be regarded as unquestionable, after it has been questioned so frequently and with such ability during this discussion. But if their opinion remains unchanged as to the clearness of our title, I put it to them whether there is not some deference due to the opinion of the great majority of the Senate who entertain different views? Is there not something due to the fact, that the majority even of their own political friends, whose patriotism and intelligence they cannot regard as inferior to their own, think that our title is not so clear but that a compromise might be honorably effected? To put a still stronger question, I ask them, as patriots and friends of Oregon, whether the fact itself of so great a division, even among ourselves, does not afford strong reason why the controversy should not be settled by an appeal to force? Are they willing, as wise and patriotic men, desirous of securing the whole of Oregon, to place the country in conflict with so great a power as England, when the united support and zealous co-operation of all would be indispensable to support the country in the contest? I appeal to them, in the humbler character, as party men, whether they are justified in persisting to push a course of policy which, whether it should end in war or not, must terminate in the division and distraction of their party?

Without pursuing this branch of the subject further, I shall conclude what I had to say in reference to it, by saying that I, for one, feel and acknowledge the change. Nothing could have induced me to vote for notice, in any form, while there was apparently no hope of compromise; but now that there is, I am disposed to do so, if it should be properly modified.

I am thus brought to the question under consideration, to which all the preceding remarks were but preliminary—shall notice be given to Great Britian to terminate the convention of joint occupancy? After what has been said, a few words will suffice to dispatch it.

The question is not free from doubt. After a review of the whole ground, I can discover but two reasons in favor of giving it. The first is, to put an end to the agitation of the Oregon question, which, without it, may run into the next presidential election, and thereby become more difficult of adjustment than ever. The other is the apprehension, that the Government of Great Britain may wait the final action of Congress in reference to notice before it will move on the subject. Were it not for such apprehension, I would be disposed to postpone notice for the present.

The next question is, in what form should it be given, if given at all? I, for one, can, under no circumstances, vote for absolute notice, although I admit it would be less dangerous now than when recommended by the message. I can-

not consent to give a vote which might be construed to imply, that there was no hope of compromise, and which might, if given in that form, leave a doubt in the public mind as to the real opinion of the Senate in reference to compromise.

Nor can I vote for notice in the form which has been sent to us from the other House. I object to it as equivocal. If the resolution means simply to declare that the President may settle the controversy by compromise, it means nothing, as the President has that right under the Constitution, and can neither be clothed or divested of it by the authority of Congress. But if it be intended as a hint to him to settle the question by negotiation and compromise, I object to it for not plainly saying so. I am utterly opposed to all equivocation, or obscure expressions, in our public acts. We are bound to say plainly what we mean to say. If we mean negotiation and compromise, let us say it distinctly and plainly, instead of sending to the President a resolution on which he may put whatever interpretation he pleases.

If we give notice at all, it seems to me, for the reasons just stated, it should be substantially as has been proposed by the gentleman from Georgia, (Mr. COLQUITT,) which plainly expresses the desire of the Senate that it should be settled by negotiation and compromise. For it I am inclined to vote, as at present advised; but regarding notice in all its forms as subordinate to settling the controversy without resort to arms, I reserve my decision until I am called upon to vote; and then I shall decide in the affirmative or negative, according as I shall judge that one or the other is best calculated to advance the end I have in view.

I have thus stated my reasons for supporting a compromise, and for favoring, at present, the giving of notice. I have been governed, as to both, by the circumstances under which I find myself placed, but for which I am no ways responsible. I am doing the best I can, where I find myself, and not what I would under different circumstances. So far from being responsible for the present state of things, I early took my stand against that line of policy which has placed us where we are. I refer to 1843. Then the Oregon question for the first time assumed a dangerous aspect. After having been long and frequently brought to the notice of Congress, without exciting attention, I then saw, or thought I saw, that it was destine at no distant period, to become an absorbing and dangerous question, and accordingly felt it to be my duty, before I decided on my course in reference to it, to examine it in all its bearings with care and deliberation. After much reflection, I came to the conclusion, which I on that occasion explained, in a speech delivered on the subject. I then saw that there were two distinct lines of policy, which might be pursued: one was to adhere to the convention of 1827; oppose every attempt to annul it, and strictly observe its provisions. I saw, that although for a time the convention had operated beneficially for Great Britain, a period was at hand when our turn would come to enjoy its benefits. Its operation had, therefore, thrown into her hands the whole fur-trade of the region; and we had looked on, while she reaped the rich harvest, when it was in our power at any time to annul the convention by giving the year's notice. But I saw that our forbearance would be compensated by the advantages which the convention was about to confer on us, if we should have the wisdom to adopt the proper line of policy to secure them. The increase of our population, and its progress westward were rapidly extending our settlements towards the Rocky mountains, through which a pass had been discovered but a few years before, which greatly increased the facility of colonizing the territory.

In this state of things, it was clear to my mind that if we adhered to the convention, and respected its provisions, the progress of events would ultimately give us possession of the whole territory; as our power to settle the territory, and thereby obtain possession, was far greater than that of Great Britain. Its distance from us was far less, and the approach through an open, grassy, country, affording great facility to the active and hardy pioneers of the West,

who emigrate with their families and herds, with little expense or fatigue. Very different was the case with Great Britain. The distance to Oregon, by water, from her shores cannot be much less than twenty thousand miles—a distance but little short of the entire circumference of the globe; while her approach to it through her American possessions opposes great difficulties to emigration on a large scale. Of all the spots on the globe now open to colonization, and susceptible of being colonized, it is the most remote from her, and the most difficult of access. She has many colonies much nearer to her, to which there is much greater facility of access, with equal soil and climate, as yet very partially settled. Even New Zealand in all these respects is superior to it. With these advantages in our favor in settling the territory, and which were yearly rapidly increasing, it was clear to my mind that all we had to do was to adhere to the convention; to observe all its provisions with the most scrupulous fidelity, in order to obtain the actual occupation and possession of the whole country.

As far as I could perceive, there was but one impediment in the way, and that was, that Great Britain, in order to prevent us from obtaining possession by settlement, might give notice herself to terminate the convention for joint occupancy. But of this I entertained but little apprehension. I had read the correspondence of former negotiations with attention, and my inference was, that she placed but little value on Oregon, as a place for a permanent settlement, and that she had, in a great measure, made up her mind, from its geographical position, that it would ultimately pass into our hands. But be this as it may, I could not but see that there were great impediments in her way of giving such notice, as would preclude us from the right of settling. She has, indeed, the same right to terminate the convention of 1827 that we have, as it is expressly provided that either may give it. But there is another convention which she claims to be still in existence, and to which we, holding under Spain, are parties with her. I refer to the Nootka Sound convention. It is strictly analogous with that of 1827, though dissimilar in its language. But unlike the latter, it contains no provision for giving notice, and can only be annuled by violation. Under it, we, according to her own showing, have equal rights with herself to joint occupancy and settlement, of which we cannot be deprived on the ground on which she places her rights to the territory, without a breach of faith.

It seemed then to me clear, that our true policy was such as I have stated; to adhere to the convention, and let settlement determine to whom the territory should belong, affording in the mean time whatever facilities we might think proper to our people emigrating to the territory, not inconsistent with the provisions of the convention, and extending our laws over them in like manner, and to the same extent that Great Britain had by act of Parliament. To me it seemed clear that we ought not to go beyond, and that we should by no means extend our laws over it territorially. The necessary effects of that would be to extend our tariff acts to the territory, under an express provision of the Constitution, which requires that all duties and taxes shall be laid uniformly throughout the United States. The restrictions imposed by our high tariff duties, on the infant commerce of the territory, would go far, not only to diminish the inducement to emigration, but to alienate the affection of its people. To enjoy the blessings of free trade over the broad Pacific, with its numerous islands and widely-extended coast, will prove in the end to be the strongest inducement to emigration; and to impose high duties, would do more to check emigration, to alienate its inhabitants, and separate them from our Union, than any other cause. Oregon will be to the Pacific what New England was to the Atlantic in its colonial state; and its people will contend as earnestly for the unrestricted enjoyment of the trade of the Pacific as the New Englanders did for that of the Atlantic before the revolution. It was, indeed, one of the principal causes which led to the revolution. Should we restrict by our high tariff duties their infant trade, they might readily find a power

prepared to extend to them all the advantages of free trade, to be followed by consequences not difficult to be perceived. Influenced by these considerations, I came to the conclusion that our true policy was to let our people emigrate and govern themselves for the present with as little interference as possible on our part. In that respect they possess great capacity from their origin and their native instincts. I would let them go there and settle the country in their own way, giving them all the aid, countenance, and support which we could, without extending our authority over them territorially, until it could be properly and safely done. But be it done when it may, great judgment and caution will be required, for there lies the great difficulty of reconciling the interest on the eastern side of the Rocky mountains with that of the western side.

The other line of policy looked to the termination of the convention by giving notice and taking adverse possession of the territory. The bill of 1843, already alluded to, was intended as the first step. I opposed it, not only because I believed that some of its provisions violated the convention, but because I believed that the course it indicated was highly impolitic. It seemed to me, indeed, to require little reflection to perceive that if the bill should pass, and the policy it indicated be adopted, that negotiation or war would necessarily follow; and that, if the former should be resorted to in the first instance to prevent war, it would terminate either in compromise or war. There could be no other result. Nor was it more difficult to perceive, that if the question was compromised, it must be on the basis of the 49th parallel. The past history of the affair, the fact that it had been frequently offered by us substantially as an ultimatum, added to the fact that 49° was the boundary on the side of this Rocky mountains, left no doubt on my mind that, if settled by compromise, it must be on that basis. It is true that our offer heretofore on that basis had been rejected, and that it might thence be inferred that Great Britain could not accede to it consistently with her honor. I am not of that impression. Things have greatly changed since our offers were made and rejected by her. Then the advantages under the convention were all in her favor; but now they have turned in favor of us. Then our capacity to settle the country was small; but now, for reasons already stated, they are great; and what is far from being immaterial, this increased capacity to settle and colonize strengthens the foundation of our claims to the territory. The capacity to settle and colonize a contiguous open region not capable of being settled or colonized by any other power, goes back to the original principles on which all claim to territory is founded.

Seeing that such would necessarily be the consequence of the line of policy indicated by the bill, and wishing to avoid both compromise and war, I took a decided stand against it. I was very ably seconded in my opposition; so much so that notwithstanding the apparently large majority in its favor, when the discussion commenced, it passed this body by an equivocal majority of one. I say equivocal, because one of the Senators felt himself constrained by accidental causes to vote for the measure, after he had avowed his opinion against it. Since then, session after session, measures have been introduced to give notice and extend our authority over the territory, with a view ultimately of taking possession of the whole. As anticipated, negotiation, in order to avoid war, followed; and now we are brought to the alternative of compromise or fighting, as ought to have been foreseen from the beginning. I again repeat, that I am in no way responsible for the present state of things; and if I am compelled in consequence to vote for compromise and notice, the responsibility rests on my friends behind me, whose course has forced the Government into it by the line of policy they have pursued. I do not impeach their patriotism; but I cannot but think that they permitted their zeal in behalf of the territory, and the impatience of those they represent to occupy it, to get the control of their better judgment.

Having been thus brought, by the line of policy to which I was opposed, to choose between compromise and war, I without hesitation take the former. In making the choice, I am actuated by no unmanly fear of the consequences of war. I know that in the existing state of the world, wars are necessary—that the most sacred regard for justice and equity, and the most cautious policy, cannot always prevent them. When war must come, I may appeal to my past history to prove that I shall not be found among those who may falter; but I shall take care never to contribute by my acts to precipitate the country into a war, when it can be fairly avoided. I am, on principle, opposed to war, and in favor of peace, because I regard peace as a positive good, and war as a positive evil. As a good, I shall ever cling to peace, so long as it can be preserved consistently with the safety and honor of the country; and as opposed to war, I shall ever resist it, so long as it may be resisted consistently with the same considerations. I am emphatically opposed to it in this case, because peace, in my opinion, can be preserved consistently with both, and war avoided without sacrificing either. I am opposed to it for the additional reason, because it would be, in my opinion, highly impolitic—a consideration never to be overlooked when a question of the kind is under consideration. I regard it as highly impolitic in this case, because I believe that, should we resort to it, we would lose, instead of securing, the two objects for which it would be avowedly declared, as I shall now proceed to show.

The first is to secure what is claimed to be our rights to the whole of Oregon, under the cry of "*all of Oregon or none.*" Those who would go into it for that object will, in my opinion, find in the end that "*none*" is much more probable than "*all.*" In coming to this conclusion, I concede to my countrymen the highest bravery, energy, patriotism, and intelligence, which can be claimed for them. But these cannot overcome the great obstacles we would have to encounter, compared to what Great Britain would have in a contest for Oregon. As long as she has a large force in the East, and remains mistress of the Pacific, she will be able to place there a much more efficient force, and at far less expense, than we possibly can at present, which would there decide the contest in her favor.

But were it otherwise, from the nature of the contest, Oregon, though the cause of the war, would be speedily forgotten. The struggle once begun, would soon cease to be for Oregon. Higher and far more powerful motives would soon guide the contest. It would speedily become a struggle for mastery between the greatest power in the world on one side, against the most growing on the other. Actuated by all the feelings belonging to such a struggle, both sides would put forth all their vigor, energy and resources, and overlooking minor points, would aim to strike the most vulnerable, and where each might have the greatest advantage, leaving Oregon to be won or lost as the contingencies of so mighty a contest might decide.

The next object, as is alleged, is to protect our citizens in Oregon. What has just been said is enough to prove how utterly it must fail. Instead of protection, war would most certainly sacrifice them; and that is a strong reason, with me, for opposing it. I feel our obligation to protect them as citizens, and brethern, and kindred. We have encouraged them to emigrate, and I will not give a vote which in my opinion would ruin and abandon them. But what war would fail to effect, would be certainly accomplished by compromise on the line offered by the President. There are none of our citizens, if I am correctly informed, settled north of 49°. Establish that line, and we at once give our citizens in Oregon peace and security, and with them full opportunity to realize their object in emigrating.

But passing from Oregon, I take broader ground, and oppose war for reasons looking to the whole. I see nothing to hope from war, be its result what it may. On the contrary, I believe that the most successful and triumphant war that could be waged—one in which all would be accomplished which its most

extravagant advocate could dare hope for—in which we should conquer the Canadas, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia—in which we should drive the British flag from the continent, and compel Great Britain to yield the whole by treaty, in the short space of ten years, would be disastrous to us. I allude not to its ravages or devastations—to the oceans of blood that must flow, and the manifold losses and miseries which would accompany the war. They are common to all wars; but however vividly painted, they have but little effect in deterring a brave people from a resort to it. No doubt these inflictions would be very great in a contest between two nations of such immense power, and so situated as to be able to do each other the greatest harm in war and the greatest good in peace. But as great as the devastation and destruction of life would be in such a struggle, they are of a nature to be speedily repaired on our side. The indomitable industry and enterprise of our people, with the great resources of the country, would soon repair the former, while our rapidly increasing population would speedily repair the latter. War has far heavier calamities for a free people than these, though less visible—calamities in their nature not easily remedied. I refer to permanent and dangerous social and political changes, which often follow in its train, in the character of the people and their institutions. A war between us and Great Britain, such as has been described, in which every nerve and muscle on either side would be strained to the utmost, and every dollar put in requisition which could be commanded, could not fail, under present circumstances, to work most disastrous, and, I fear, incurable changes in the social condition of our people, and in their political institutions. To realize the consequences in this respect, which must follow, it is necessary to look at the immense extent to which it would rage. It would, in all probability, prove a Mexican and an Indian war, as well as a war with Great Britain, and as such would extend to every portion of our entire frontier, including the Atlantic and the Pacific, the inland and exterior, constituting a circuit of probably not less than 7,000 miles. It would require, in order to conduct it with the energy necessary to bring it in so short a time to the successful termination supposed, especially in a war for mastery, immense exertions on land and water. Two navies—one on the Atlantic and the other on the lakes—and six or seven armies, would be required for the purpose, even on the supposition that Oregon would be abandoned. One army would be required on the Mexican frontier; and let no one sneer at the mention of such a power. Feeble as it now is, when paid and supported by British gold, and trained and commanded by British officers, Mexico would prove a formidable enemy. See what British skill and training have made the feeble Sepoys. The Mexicans are a braver and a hardier people, and, what is no small point, would constitute the cheapest of all armies. There must be in addition, one to guard the gulf frontier; another to guard the southern; another the northern frontier on the Atlantic; another to assail the northeastern frontier on the side of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; and another to assail the Canadian; and finally another to protect our widely extended Indian frontier. All these, in so mighty a struggle against the greatest of all powers, putting forth her utmost strength, would require a force, including the two navies, of not less, I would suppose, than 200,000 men continually in pay. The expense would be enormous. One of the most venerable and experienced of our citizens, Mr. Gallatin, has estimated it at 65 or 70 millions of dollars annually, if my memory serves me. My impression is that it falls far short of the actual cost, and that $100,000,000 would not be an over estimate. Supposing the sum of $50,000,000 could be annually raised by taxation—a sum far greater than he estimates, and in my opinion much beyond what could be effected—it would leave $50,000,000 annually to be raised by loans, or a forced paper circulation. Now, allowing the war to continue for ten years, there would be incurred a debt in the time of $500,000,000, according to these estimates. Even that, it is probable, would fall much short

of the reality, assuming the sum stated should be annually required. It would be difficult to obtain loans in Europe; for owing to the conduct of some of the States in reference to repudiation, and other causes not necessary to state, the feeling of Europe would, I fear, be generally against us, while our own resources would not be sufficient to raise the sum required without a great depreciation of our credit, with a loss of 20, 30, or even 40 per cent., before the termination of the war, in contracting loans, or in consequence of the depreciation of our paper circulation. Including all, our public debt would, at the end of the struggle, be probably not less than six or seven hundred millions of dollars. But this is not all.

We would be plunged into the paper system as deeply as we were in the days of the revolution; and would terminate the war with a mortgage of six or seven hundred millions of dollars on the labor of our people;—for on labor the whole must fall ultimately, while a large portion of this vast amount would go into the pockets of those who struck not a blow, nor lost a drop of blood in the contest, and who acquired their gains by seizing upon the distress of the government to drive hard and usurious bargains. In addition, we should have the difficult task to perform of restoring to a sound state a greatly depreciated paper circulation, or of extricating ourselves from it whatever way we might—a task which cannot be performed without great distress to the country and ruinous effect to that large and usually the enterprising portion of the community, the debtors. The effects of all this would be highly injurious to the social relations of the people. A powerful artificial class would be created on one side, and a poor and dependent one on the other.

Nor would its effect on our political institutions be less disastrous. Such a war would obliterate the line of distinction, in a great measure, between the Federal and the State governments, by conferring on the former vastly increased power and influence. We would hear no more of State rights. The federal government would then become a great national consolidated government. Our very success would give a military impulse to the public mind and to the character of the government which it would be hard, if possible, to overcome, and which would seek conquest after conquest until a spirit would be engendered totally inconsistent with the genius of our system of government. It would then be in the straight and downward road, which leads to where so many free States have terminated their career—a military despotism. In the mean time, we would have to provide for three or four successful generals, who would soon be competing for the presidency; and before the generation which waged the war would have passed away, they might possibly witness a contest between hostile generals for that supreme office—a contest between him who might conquer Mexico, and him who might conquer Canada, terminated by the sword.

I appeal to the gentlemen who are the warm advocates for "all of Oregon or none," regardless of this mighty hazard, and whose separation from us on this question I regret, and solemnly put the question to them—is it for you—you, who assume to be democrats *par excellence*—you who are the enemies of the paper system, and of all artificial classes in society—is it for you to support a course of policy which might lead to such disastrous consequences?

But I oppose war not simply on the patriotic ground of a citizen looking to the freedom and prosperity of his own country, but on still broader grounds, as a friend of improvement, civilization, and progress. Viewed in reference to them, at no period has it ever been so desirable to preserve the general peace which now blesses the world. Never in its history has a period occurred so remarkable as that which has elapsed since the termination of the great war in Europe, with the battle of Warterloo, for the great advances made in all these particulars. Chemical and mechanical discoveries and inventions have multiplied beyond all former example, adding with their advance to the comforts of life in a degree far greater and more universal than all that was ever known before. Civilization

has during the same period spread its influence far and wide, and the general progress in knowledge, and its diffusion through all ranks of society, has outstripped all that has ever gone before it. The two great agents of the physical world have become subject to the will of man, and made subservient to his wants and enjoyments; I allude to steam and electricity, under whatever name the latter may be called. The former has overcome distance both on land and water, to an extent of which former generations had not the least conception to be possible. It has in effect reduced the Atlantic to half its former width, while, at the same time, it has added three-fold to the rapidity of intercourse by land. Within the same period, electricity, the greatest and most diffused of all known physical agents, has been made the instrument for the transmission of thoughts, I will not say with the rapidity of lightning, but by lightning itself. Magic wires are stretching themselves in all directions over the earth, and when their mystic meshes shall have been united and perfected, our globe itself will become endowed with sensitiveness, so that whatever touches on any one point, will be instantly felt on every other. All these improvements—all this increasing civilization—all the progress now making, would be in a great measure arrested by a war between us and Great Britain. As great as it is, it is but the commencement—the dawn of a new civilization, more refined, more elevated, more intellectual, more moral, than the present and all preceding it. Shall it be we who shall incur the high responsibility of retarding its advance, and by such a war as this would be?

I am, in this connexion, opposed to war between the United States and Great Britain. They are the two countries the furthest in advance in this great career of improvement and amelioration of the condition of our race. They are, besides, the two most commercial, and are diffusing, by their widely extended commerce, their blessings over the whole globe. We have been raised up by Providence for these great and noble purposes, and I trust we shall not fail to fulfil our high destiny. I am, besides, especially opposed to war with England at this time; because I hold that it is now to be decided, whether we are to exist in future as friends or enimies. War at this time, and for this cause, would decide supremacy, we shall hereafter stand in that of enemies. It would give birth to a struggle in which one or the other would have to succumb before it terminated; and which in the end, might prove ruinous to both. On the contrary, if war can be avoided, powerful causes are now in operation, calculated to cement and secure a lasting—I hope a perpetual—peace between the two countries, by breaking down the barriers which impede their commerce, and thereby uniting them more closely by a vastly enlarged commercial intercourse, equally beneficial to both. If we should now succeed in setting the example of free trade between us, it would force all other civilized countries to follow it in the end. The consequence would be, to diffuse a prosperity greater and more universal than can be well conceived, and to unite by bonds of mutual interest the people of all countries. But in advocating the cause of free trade, I am actuated not less by the political consequences likely to flow from it, than the advantages to be derived from it in an economical point of view. I regard it in the dispensation of Providence as one of the great means of ushering in the happy period foretold by inspired prophets and poets, when war should be no more.

I am finally opposed to war, because peace—peace is pre-eminently our policy. There may be nations, restricted to small territories, hemmed in on all sides, so situated that war may be necessary to their greatness. Such is not our case. Providence has given us an inheritance stretching across the entire continent from East to West, from ocean to ocean, and from North to South, covering by far the greater and better part of its temperate zone. It comprises a region not only of vast extent, but abundant in all resources; excellent in climate; fertile and co-operant in soil; capable of sustaining in the plentiful enjoyment of all the necessaries of life a population of ten times our present number. Our great

mission, as a people, is to occupy this vast domain; to replenish it with an intelligent, virtuous, and industrious population; to convert the forests into cultivated fields; to drain the swamps and morasses, and cover them with rich harvests; to build up cities, towns, and villages in every direction, and to unite the whole by the most rapid intercourse between all the parts. War would but impede the fulfilment of this high mission, by absorbing the means and diverting the energies which would be devoted to the purpose. On the contrary, secure peace, and time, under the guidance of a sagacious and cautious policy, "a wise and masterly inactivity," will speedily accomplish the whole. I ventured to say "a wise and masterly inactivity," in despite of the attempt to cast ridicule upon the expression. Those who have made the attempt would seem to confound such inactivity with mere inaction. Nothing can be more unlike. They are as wide apart as the poles. The one is the offspring of indolence, or ignorance, or indifference. The other is the result of the profoundest sagacity and wisdom—a sagacity which looks into the operations of the great causes in the physical, moral, and political world; which, by their incessant operation, are ever changing the condition of nations for good or evil; and wisdom, which knows how to use and direct them when acting favorably, by slight touches, to facilitate their progress, and by removing impediments which might thwart or impede their course—and not least, to wait patiently for the fruits of their operation. He who does not understand the difference between such inactivity and mere inaction—the doing of nothing—is still in the horn-book of politics, without a glimpse of those higher elements of statesmanship by which a country is elevated to greatness and prosperity. Time is operating in our favor with a power never before exerted in favor of any other people. It is our great friend; and under the guidance of such a policy, it will accomplish all that we can desire. Our population is now increasing at the rate of about 600,000 annually, and is progressing with increased rapidity every year. It will average, if not impeded, nearly a million during the next twenty-five years; at the end of which period our population ought to reach to upwards of forty millions. With this vast increase, it is rolling westwardly with a strong and deep current, and will, by the end of that period, have spread from ocean to ocean. Its course is irresistible. The coast of the Pacific will then be probably as densely populated, and as thickly studded with towns and villages, in proportion to its capacity to sustain population, as that of the Atlantic now is. At the same rate, we shall have increased to upwards of eighty millions of people at the end of another twenty-five years; when, with one foot on the Atlantic and the other on the Pacific, and occupying a position between the eastern and western coasts of the old continent, we shall be in a position better calculated to control the commerce of both oceans, and to exert an influence over both continents, than any other country in the world. If we avoid war, and adhere to peace, all this will be effected—effected, I trust, without the loss of our free popular institutions. I am aware how difficult is the task to preserve free institutions over so wide a space, and so immense a population; but we are blessed with a Constitution admirably calculated to accomplish it. Its elastic power is unequalled, which is to be attributed to its federal character. The hope of success depends on preserving that feature in its full perfection, and adhering to peace as our policy. War may make us great; but let it never be forgotten that peace only can make us both great and free.

With a few remarks relating to myself personally, I shall conclude. I have been charged with being more strongly inclined to secure the annexation of Texas, than our rights to Oregon. It has been attributed to my greater partiality to the South than to the West. But I am yet to learn why Texas should be considered as belonging to the South rathern than to the West. I always thought that it formed a part, and not an unimportant part, of the valley of the Mississippi; and on that account, as well as for giving greater security to the southern portion of

the valley, the West desired its annexation. Besides, I have yet to learn that Texas is confined to a southern latitude. I had supposed that it extended far north and west, up to the latitude of 42° in the neighborhood of the great pass of the Rocky mountains, on which the value of Oregon to us so much depends. I had supposed that what are called the Southern States had not so direct and deep an interest in its annexation as the West; but it would seem, from language held on the occasion, that in all this I was mistaken, and that the annexation of Texas was purely a Southern question, and only supported by the West under the expectation of obtaining in return the support of the South to the whole of Oregon up to 54° 40', and, if necessary, at the certain hazard of a war.

But passing by all this, and assuming that Texas was purely a Southern, and Oregon a Western question, I repel the charge of partiality, and shall now proceed to show, that if a different line of policy was pursued by me in reference to the two, it was because it was right and proper it should be. I treated both questions in the manner best calculated to effect the object in view, and indeed the only one by which both could be secured. The circumstances of the two cases were entirely different. In the case of Texas, time was against us, in that of Oregon, time was with us; and hence the difference in my course of policy in reference to them. To understand the difference it is necessary to premise, that Texas had reached that period in her history when it was clear that she would be compelled to form intimate and dependent relations either with us or England, if she continued independent. But it was manifest, if left alone, without any movement on our part, that her connexion must be with England and not with us. She could extend to Texas commercial advantages far greater than we possibly could, and afford her greater facilities in obtaining means to relieve her from her great pecuniary embarrassments. England saw this, and had actually commenced her movements to avail herself of its advantages. We, too, perceived it; and also that annexation afforded the only means of counteracting her movements, and preventing Texas from being placed exclusively under her control. In this emergency, I was called to the State Department, with a view of taking charge of the pending negotiation for annexation. I saw that the time had arrived when immediate and decided action was required; that time was against us, and that to resist the effects of its operation boldness and decision were indispensable. I acted accordingly, and success proved the soundness of my policy. It was not a case for masterly inactivity. Not so the case of Oregon, where time was with us, and hence the different line of policy which I adopted in reference to it, and which would have secured the whole, had my advice been followed, as has been explained.

In one particular my policy was the same in both cases. I aimed in each to avoid war and preserve peace. I clearly perceived that in annexing Texas there was no danger of a war with England, if managed judiciously. She was an independent state, and had been so acknowledged by England, France, and other powers. She had a right, as such, to dispose of herself, and to unite her destinies with ours, if she saw proper, without any right on the part of England to resist it, or ground or pretext to make war in consequence. I also perceived that there were no just grounds to apprehend a Mexican war in consequence. She was not in a condition to make war, without the aid of England, and there was no reason to apprehend that she would be aided or countenanced in it by the latter; unless, indeed, the Oregon question should terminate in a war between us and her, in which event, I regarded a Mexican war as inevitable, as has been stated. Thus far my anticipations have been realized—Texas annexed, and peace preserved, by the policy which I pursued. A different line of policy—one which would have permitted England to obtain the ascendency over Texas, which she would have acquired without annexation, would have inevitably led to a state of things, involving us and England finally in war. It would have been impossible to prevent feelings of jealousy and enmity from growing up between us and Texas. The very similari-

ty of our character and pursuits, and the rivalry which they would give birth to, would necessarily lead to that result; while the long and ill-defined boundary between the two countries, extending for more than a thousand miles through forests, prairies, and navigable rivers, without a natural boundary in any part, would produce frequent collisions between our people and those of Texas. Controversies and conflicts would have been the result. Texas, as the weaker power, would throw herself upon Great Britain for support; and wars, frequent and bloody wars, between us and her would have followed. Annexation has fortunately removed these causes of war. Should the Oregon controversy terminate in peace, every cause of war between the two countries would be removed, leaving the prospect of lasting peace between them.

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